[*SECOND EDITION.*]

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH

At LEEDS,

On the 25th of October, 1798,

(Being his Majesty's Accession to the Throne.)

By the Rev. JOHN KING, A. M.

MINISTER OF ST. JAMES'S CHURCH, IN LEEDS.

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TO such Readers as are at all acquainted with Style, and the general Rules of Composition, it will be unnecessary to remark, that the following Sermon was written in great Haste, and with no View whatever to Publication.—It is by no Means obtruded by the Writer upon the Public; for the Public have, by their many and urgent Entreaties, wrested it from him. Their Requests were at first positively rejected, and would have been so to the last, but to avoid the Appearance of ridiculous Affectation.

Having said this, it is hoped, that such as trouble themselves to read the Sermon, will read it with Candour; that so the End may, in some Degree, be answered, which they only could have had in View, who have so warmly solicited its Publication.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A SERMON.

PROVERBS xxv. 2.

The Honour of Kings is to search out a Matter.

AS this is the Anniverſary of our King's Acceſſion to the Throne, and we are now aſſembled together to commemorate that event, it will probably be expected, that ſomething appropriate to the occaſion ſhould be offered, by referring in ſomeway or other to the Nature of Government.

As this is a favourite topic with the public, and has of late years been frequently and publicly diſcuſſed, there is little new that can be added, and nothing, perhaps, of profitable information. Should I, therefore, only recall to your notice what you have often heard, your diſappointment cannot be great, and your attention will not be thrown away. It is a matter of univerſal experience, which ſuperſedes all diſquiſition and reaſoning, that ſociety can no where exiſt without government. For however a number of men might agree together for a time, each engaging to provide for his own ſubſiſtence, it is eaſy to ſee how ſoon, how very ſoon they muſt fall into confuſion, without ſome ſort of government eſtabliſhed among them for the rule and meaſure of their conduct towards each other. Men, for inſtance, are not always in the mind to labour, but they are always in the mind to eat. Thus the ſlothful man would in time ſeize upon the proviſion of his neighbour. In like manner, the moroſe and violent-tempered man would, upon any ſlight and trivial offence,

or no offence at all, injure and diſtreſs his fellow. The proud man would inſiſt upon ſome degree of deference painful to the reſt, and the ſtrong one would not fail, upon occaſion, to diſturb and oppreſs the weak.

Thus two proud men coming together, a quarrel would be ſure to enſue: The weak would unite to reſiſt the encroachments of the ſtrong, and the ſlothful would be murdered for breaking in upon his neighbour's right. Of courſe, all would be diſturbance, inſecurity, and confuſion, till ſome ſort of government ſhould be adopted, to which, either by mutual conſent, or ſuperior force, they ſhould be obliged to ſubmit. This is a truth ſo well underſtood, and ſo univerſally impreſſed upon the human mind, that there has been no ſociety of men that ever attempted to ſubſiſt together without putting it in practice.

The moſt barbarous ſavages that have yet been diſcovered, though to appearance living in common, and herding together like the beaſts of the field, have had their laws, and perſons duly appointed by the reſt to carry them into execution. The vaſt variety of tribes among the Africans, without a ſingle exception that we have heard of, have been thus regulated. As have alſo the wandering Eſquimaux of North America, the ſlothful natives of Terra del Fuego, the ſeveral iſlanders of the South Sea, and the bloody and frightful inhabitants of New Zealand. There is not a band of robbers, either here or in any other country, which does not ſubſiſt in the ſame way. They have their laws, to which they engage to ſubmit, and from which there is neither exemption nor appeal. In every riot, inſurrection, and mutiny in the ſtate, there is always an attempt at ſubordination and order among the fomenters and abettors of them; being conſcious to themſelves, that where there are no rulers, there can be no order, no proper direction given to force, no object purſued aright, no reſiſtance made, no advantage gained.

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In the riots of 1780, the mutiny at the Nore, and the late inſurrection in Ireland, we have ſeen all this fully demonſtrated. But we may bring the matter ſtill nearer home, and ſee it every day exemplified in the moſt common and familiar inſtances among ourſelves. No family can ſubſiſt in any peace, or order, or comfort, without ſomething of diſcipline and government. Some authority muſt be acknowledged; ſome rules preſcribed or underſtood, to which the conduct of the ſeveral members muſt be referred, and to which they muſt engage in common to ſubmit.

In a word, no party whatever can ſubſiſt, but on principles of this ſame kind. It is not material for what purpoſe men may unite, whether for religion, or pleaſure, or mutual profit; for the minds of men being ſubject to perpetual change, their views of things will vary continually, circumſtances will alter, and with them their feelings and tempers. Unleſs, therefore, ſome ſettled rules be eſtabliſhed, to which, on ſuch occaſions, they ſhould be obliged to refer, and by which in all frames, ſituations, and tempers, they ſhall be compelled to abide, they would of neceſſity ſoon quarrel, and inſtead of obtaining as friends, the object of their union, in being a mutual help, ſupport, and comfort to each other, would ſeparate as enemies, filled with mutual hatred, rancour, and diſguſt.

Now if ſuch would neceſſarily be the caſe in ſmall ſocieties, as in families, religious parties, benevolent clubs, and the like, where there is real affection in the members—an union of heart, as well as deſign; where the intereſt of each is the ſame, and the object before them is one, and that clearly aſcertained, allowed, and followed by all; we may conclude, that ſuch of courſe would be the caſe in larger ſocieties, as in ſtates and kingdoms, where the intereſts of men are ſo various, intricate, and complicated; where the objects of purſuit are ſo different, and there is neither an union of heart

heart nor deſign in any thing, but men are generally haters and oppoſers of each other. This is a truth ſo clear and commanding in itſelf, that it needs no formal argument to prove it; the bare and ſimple ſtatement is all the proof that it requires, and all that reaſonable men will aſk.

As government then is ſo indiſpenſably neceſſary, that no ſociety can ſubſiſt without it, the next queſtion is, Which is the ſort of government that may be ſaid to be the beſt? To this there have been many ſtrange and contradictory anſwers. Conſidered as a general queſtion, no particular anſwer can be given that will at all come up to the point, ſo as to ſatisfy the different enquirers by whom ſuch a queſtion may be aſked. Since that kind of government that might be *beſt* for one ſort of people, might be nearly the *worſt* for another. This will appear paradoxical only to ignorant and unthinking men; for in ſettling a form of government in any country, much attention muſt be paid to the genius and diſpoſition of the people, to their old habits and prejudices, and to their relative ſituation and connection with other ſtates. And he that ſhould draw out a ſyſtem of government, however excellent in itſelf, and perfect in theory, and ſhould attempt to impoſe it upon all nations alike, even ſuppoſing he had the power to do ſo, would act as irrational, as abſurd and cruel a part, as the tyrant, who ſtretched all diminutive people to the length of his own bed, and reduced others that were too long for it, by cutting off either their legs or their heads.

The diſputes on this ſubject which have been ſo often and fiercely agitated, ſeem like the angry diſputations of religious ſectaries. They have differed more in form than in reality; for the principles of all governments, like the principles of univerſal grammar, muſt be the ſame. There muſt be ſome ſupreme directing authority to which the bulk of the people muſt ſubmit, and with-

out

out which government could not be carried on in any form. You may diſtinguiſh this authority by what name you pleaſe, and by ſuch terms as ſhall make it appear in one country, very oppoſite and contradictory, when compared with the ſupreme directing authority in another; yet as to all the main purpoſes of government, it is nearly one and the ſame thing.

In France it is called at this time a Directory. A little while ſince at Venice and Genoa, a Doge—in Rome, a Pope—in Tuſcany, a Duke—in Lucca, a Council—in Germany, an Emperor—in America, a Preſident—in Great Britain, a King.

But as we, who are here aſſembled, profeſs to be Chriſtians, and to receive the Bible as the revelation of God, given to be a light to our feet, and a lantern to our path, to lead us into all truth; it may be aſked, What ſort of government does the Bible recommend? for *that*, as coming from God, muſt concern *us* the moſt, and be aſſuredly the beſt?——To this enquiry I anſwer, that God has not ſaid *one* word upon the ſubject. He has left all nations free to chuſe their own forms of government, as he has to eſtabliſh their own laws of marriage; only this he has ſaid, "Let every ſoul be "ſubject to the higher powers, for there is no power "but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God, "whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the "ordinance of God, and they that reſiſt ſhall receive to "themſelves damnation."——Now this declaration, as coming from God, is deciſive, and to men that make God's word the rule of their conduct, it leaves no room for cavil, ſpeculation, or objection. If it be their lot to live under a tyrannical and oppreſſive government, it is beyond a doubt their duty, as Chriſtians, to ſubmit; for God may puniſh them by a wicked and oppreſſive government, as by a peſtilence, a famine, or an earthquake. To the obſtinate and rebellious Jews God ſays, "I will

"give

" give children to be their princes, and babes ſhall rule " over them, and the people ſhall be oppreſſed every " one by another."

When the government enjoins what contradicts God's poſitive command, it is without doubt to be reſiſted, and that even unto blood; but I believe in no other caſe, however *vexatious*, *cruel*, and *oppreſſive*. When the Apoſtles were forbidden to preach in the name of Chriſt, they anſwered, " whether it be right in the ſight of God " to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye;" for they had juſt before received a poſitive command from God to go and preach unto all nations, and not to be afraid of their terror. So when the Jewiſh rulers charged them with preaching contrary to their commands, they ſaid, " we ought to obey God rather than " man." But in all other caſes they ſubmitted, and took joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, and every other hardſhip, indignity and contempt that could be heaped upon them.

St. Paul, who travelled more than all the reſt of the Apoſtles, founded more churches, and gave a greater variety of directions for the regulation of the Chriſtian conduct, ſays not one word about what was the *beſt* form of government, but ſubmitted alike to all. He went about preaching Chriſt the Saviour of the World, and the Lord of Conſcience, and not as ſome do, the leader of a party, and the patron of politics; he regarded not who was king, or who was governor; whether they ruled in juſtice or oppreſſion; whether they were the protectors or devourers of their people. He prayed earneſtly for them himſelf, and exhorted all others to do the ſame.

And if the Apoſtle did this for the worſt of kings—for a Caligula, a Claudius, and a Nero, the bloodieſt tyrants that ever ſat upon a throne,—the diſgrace and ſcorn of human nature, who hunted the Chriſtians like wild

wild beaſts, burnt up their houſes, and gloried in the humiliation, diſgrace, and anguiſh of their ſubjects: It cannot be made a doubt what is the duty of Chriſtians to ſuch governors and kings, as rule in the fear of God, on principles of juſtice and equity; who, inſtead of rioting in ſeraglios and brothels, ſurrounded with eunuchs and women, and leaving the government of their people to buffoons, to minions, and to paraſites, are themſelves eyes and ears and hands to them; who are intent on the public good, anxious to *ſearch out every matter*, and to promote, to the utmoſt of their power, the beſt intereſt, ſecurity and glory of their ſubjects.

Now, without further enlarging on the ſubject, or diſcanting on the peculiar nature and excellencies of our own invaluable government, it will not, can not, with juſtice be denied, that ſuch as I have now deſcribed is the King whom God in his mercy has ſet over us. And if it be the *honour of Kings*, as our text ſays, *to ſearch out a matter*, great indeed is the honour that is due to ours. For there is nothing, I repeat it, that could any way contribute to the beſt intereſt, the ſecurity, and glory of the kingdom, that he has not *ſearched out*. Religion, the higheſt and beſt intereſt of a people, has been, from the firſt hour he aſcended the throne to the preſent, his peculiar care. He has been a nurſing father to the church, has given great encouragement to pious men, has oppoſed the ſcruples and tenets of none, but given full liberty of conſcience to all. He has diſcouraged in every poſſible way all immorality and profaneneſs, and has exhibited to his family, the court, and the kingdom at large, an example, in all reſpects worthy of imitation, as a chriſtian, a maſter, a father, and a huſband. He has *ſought out* the abuſes of former reigns, and, as far as has been poſſible, remedied them in his own. He has ſecured the ſubſtantial purpoſes of juſtice to the poor, as well as the rich, by making the Judges independent.

The *glory* of the nation has been *ſought out*, by the eſtabliſhment of many and valuable inſtitutions, by the encouragement given to commerce, learning, and the arts; by the diſtinguiſhed manner in which our ſoldiers and ſailors have been noticed, and the high honours with which all their extraordinary exertions have been crowned.

The *ſecurity* of the nation has been *ſought out*, by the uncommon vigilance that has been paid to all the movements of the wicked, the ſeditious, and diſaffected. Wiſe and ſalutary meaſures have been adopted to break their power, to unravel and confound their plans. No rank, no talents, no influence have been ſpared for the public good; but ſedition, and violence, and outrage have every where been marked, guarded againſt, confounded and diſgraced. In the late infuriate, infatuated clamour for Peace, Peace on any terms, the *ſecurity* of the nation was not only *ſought out*, but the very exiſtence of it preſerved, by a ſteady, a ſolemn, and dignified rejection of it. But for this, we had laid up our ſhips, diſbanded our forces, truſted to a foe, whom no honour, no oaths, no treaties could bind; who like a ſavage and fell tiger, or the arch-fiend of hell, would, at the firſt unguarded moment he had ſeen, have broken in upon us as a flood, and ſunk us, ere now, beneath the loweſt of his degraded, plundered, and deſpairing vaſſals.

In theſe things, and numberleſs others, which muſt readily ſuggeſt themſelves to all our minds, we muſt ſee, that whatever could tend to our happineſs, as a people, has been *ſought out* by our King, with unremitting attention, fidelity, and care. So that, amidſt all the convulſions of Europe, the deſolations and blood that have deluged our ſurrounding neighbours, we have known nothing of them but from report. We have ſat, during the ſtorms that have been ſhaking others to the centre, under our own fig trees and vines, in perfect quietneſs, ſecurity, and peace; and inſtead of groaning under

under taxes and exactions, as all other nations have done, to oppoſe the common enemy, we have only contributed out of our abundance, what we have hardly felt; what our amazing proſperity and plenty have enabled us to part with, without depriving us of a ſingle article, either of comfort or luxury. So that at this moment, amidſt all the expenditure of a long and tedious war, we are the richeſt, the happieſt, the moſt envied, and the moſt exalted nation upon the earth.

'But the poor are in want.' I know this is the clamour of the diſaffected; but the poor in this kingdom are *rich*, compared with the poor of any other kingdom upon earth. They are here more attended to, better treated, and every way better provided for, than in any other nation. Their rights are here acknowledged in common with thoſe of the rich, and they are as much under the ſhelter and protection of the laws. With reſpect to *liberty*, about which ſo much has been ſaid, we enjoy all that we can reaſonably deſire. We have not indeed the liberty of hurting, plundering, and diſtreſſing each other with impunity; a liberty which none but fiends and damned ſpirits would aſk; but we have every liberty beſides.

When I think of theſe things, and feel myſelf in the quiet and peaceable poſſeſſion of every liberty I could dare to uſe, or dare to aſk of the Almighty, I feel a riſing of indignation that I know not how to ſuppreſs, that any of the inhabitants of this free, this happy, and diſtinguiſhed country, ſhould be ſo beſotted as to murmur; ſo unthankful to their King; ſo ungrateful to their God. But more eſpecially, that they ſhould be ſo wrought upon by the proſcribed and deſperate leaders of revolt, as to wiſh for *French liberty*. For what is the liberty which the French have hitherto given to every people that have applied for their aſſiſtance? They have found their lands like the garden of Eden, and left them, in every inſtance, a wild and deſolate waſte.

Private property has been every where confiſcated to repleniſh their own coffers; the looms and manufactories have been drained to recruit and enlarge their armies; the beſt and richeſt citizens have been murdered to ſecure the conqueſts they have made, and the reſt have been either driven into exile, or by ſevere and terrible requiſitions goaded into ſloth, into ſullenneſs or deſpair; and what is ſtill more horrible than all this, more curſed of God, and ſhocking to humanity, the defenceleſs, broken-hearted women have, in every place, been given up to violation and inſult, to whet the ſpirits and gratify the luſt of a bloated, a ſavage, and licentious ſoldiery.

And theſe are the men that ſome in this happy, flouriſhing kingdom would have applied to for liberty! and to whom, ſhameful, nay, incredible to relate, ſome of our friends and brothers in Ireland, have actually applied. But thanks, thanks to God, their mad, headlong counſels have been foiled, and defeat heaped upon defeat, have ſaved them, though againſt their wills, for future comfort, repentance and mercy.

My brethren, I muſt not enlarge; but let me call upon you again and again, agreeably to the intention of our aſſembling here this morning, to lift up your hearts in grateful, fervent prayers to God, that the King whom he has given us in mercy, may in mercy long be continued to us; that he would ſecure him in all the moments of danger, by his own ſtrong and ſtretched-out arm, that ſecret deſigns and open violence may alike be harmleſs, and that all his enemies, either at home or abroad, may be known, abhorred, and conquered; that ſo, having reigned his appointed time upon earth, and filled up the circle of honour, of uſefulneſs, and mercy, Eternal Wiſdom has determined for his courſe, he may depart, full of years, and full of glory, to reign with the ranſomed of the Lord in heaven for ever and ever.

I would

I would add but one word more. If it be *the honour of Kings* below *to ſearch out a matter*, muſt it not be ſo of the Great Head of the Church, the King immortal, eternal, inviſible, above? It is, my brethren, indeed; for he has ſolemnly declared, that he *ſearcheth* all hearts, that his eyes run to and fro through the whole earth, beholding the evil and the good; that darkneſs and light are alike to him, and that from him nothing is hid; that wickedneſs ſhall not go unpuniſhed, and he will by no means ſpare the guilty.

If, then, ſedition, ſtubbornneſs, and rebellion be *ſought out* with care, treated with ſcorn, diſgrace, and infamy, by Kings of the earth, what muſt it be by the King of heaven? Shall not He *ſearch it out*, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity; in whoſe ſight the heavens are not clean, and before whom the angels are charged with folly? Yes, the day is coming when God will indeed *ſearch out* and bring to light every rebel againſt his government. Now he has given a ſpace for repentance, and ſent his Miniſters to publiſh and ſound abroad a proclamation of mercy. But the day will ſoon be here when this amneſty ſhall finiſh, and he ſhall not only *ſearch out*, but gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire. He will not now do it, becauſe he delighteth in mercy, and waiteth to be gracious; becauſe he is long-ſuffering, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance. He will not now root up the tares, leſt he alſo root up the wheat. He will not take away the ungodly huſband, leſt the heart of the pious wife ſhould be broken; nor deſtroy the wicked children, leſt their godly parents ſhould be miſerable; but he will do all this hereafter. He will ſeparate the good from the bad, as the ſhepherd divideth his ſheep from the goats.

O, my

O, my brethren, that I could perſuade you all to conſider this, that you would all take unto yourſelves words, and return unto the Lord, from whom you have ſtrayed, againſt whom you have ſo ſadly and ſhamefully rebelled; that you would now bow at the footſtool of mercy, and receive the favour he offers; the pardon, the forgiveneſs and love he is ready to beſtow.

But if ye will not conſider theſe things now, but like the remaining rebels of the ſtate, will truſt to deſperate ſhifts; ſhut your eyes, your ears, and your hearts againſt conviction, and go on from bad to worſe, then know that you muſt conſider them hereafter. For thus ſaith the Lord Almighty, In the latter days, ye ſhall conſider them perfectly; ye ſhall return then and ſee the difference between them who ſerve God, and them who ſerve him not; between them who are his redeemed, his loyal and grateful ſervants, and them who live and die in a ſtate of rebellion againſt him. For theſe, with all their proud and high looks, their pomp, their glory and greatneſs, ſhall go down quick into hell; but the ſervants of God ſhall be received up into glory, and ſhall ſhine as the ſtars in the firmament for ever and ever.

Shall I conclude now with the cold, diſcouraging thought, that any of you who hear me this morning will not be of this bleſſed number? No. We have *all* been liſtening to the goodneſs, the kindneſs, and the care of our earthly King, and we will *all* lift up our hearts to the contemplation of the goodneſs, the forbearance and mercy of our heavenly King, for he has been good to us indeed: Whom has he favoured as he has favoured us? He has filled our cup with bleſſings, even to the brim. He has preſerved us amidſt all our wanderings, provocations, and rebellions; and while thouſands and millions of his rebel creatures have been ſwept in anger into hell, he has provided a Ranſom for *us*, that *we* ſhould never go into that place of torment.

He

He has promiſed to forgive our ſins, and to remember our iniquities no more. May then his goodneſs prevail, and lead us all to repentance.

May the blood of his dear Son be ſprinkled upon our ſouls, procure our peace and ſeal our pardon. May we all be renewed after his own glorious image; become from this hour his ſervants, his loyal and grateful ſervants, that ſo he may guide us by his counſel, preſerve and protect us through life, and at death receive us to glory.

FINIS.

REGISTERED
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